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First Committee

4th meeting

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New York

President: U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Election of the Rapporteur

The Chairman: In accordance with the programme of work and agreed timetable, the Committee will first elect its Rapporteur and then continue with its general debate.

As you will recall, at its second and third meetings held on 14 September and 2 October, the Committee elected Ms. Petra Schneebauer of Austria, Mr. Alberto Guani of Uruguay and Mr. Abdelkader Mesdoua of Algeria as Vice-Chairmen. It was also decided to postpone the election of the Rapporteur to a later date. Today, I am pleased to inform you that, as a result of consultations within the Group of Eastern European States, that Group has nominated Mr. Rastislav Gabriel of the Slovak Republic as a candidate to the post of the Rapporteur of the First Committee.

As there are no other nominations, and recalling rule 113 of the rules of procedure and established practice, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to dispense with the secret ballot and to declare Mr. Rastislav Gabriel elected Rapporteur of the First Committee by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I wish to extend my warm congratulations to Mr. Rastislav Gabriel upon his election as Rapporteur of the First Committee, and I invite him to take the seat reserved for him at the podium.

I am pleased to note that, by completing the election of its Bureau members, the Committee has reaffirmed the important pattern of rotation for the posts of the chairmanship and the rapporteurship among the various regional groups established last year.

The Committee has now concluded its consideration of the election of its officers.

General debate (*continued*)

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Mr. Chairman, the Bangladesh delegation congratulates you on your election as the Chairman of this Committee. Our special greetings and felicitations are directed to you as a neighbouring country. We assure you of our fullest cooperation. We are confident that under your skilful leadership our deliberations will be fruitful.

We also express our thanks and appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his comprehensive presentation covering various issues before this Committee.

Here I would like to pay tribute to the undeniably important role played by civil society, including the non-governmental organizations, in the field of disarmament. Through their constructive contribution, members of civil society have made a valuable contribution in various initiatives on nuclear and conventional disarmament, with remarkable success in

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the areas of landmines and small arms. Civil society should receive our full support in its endeavour to strengthen the hand of the United Nations in the promotion of general and complete disarmament.

As we participate in this general debate, let me reiterate Bangladesh's commitment to the goal of general and complete disarmament, which is unequivocal. This commitment flows from our constitutional obligation. Our adherence to major disarmament treaties stems from it. To this end, we have supported and shall continue to support all efforts leading towards total and complete disarmament including the effective elimination of all nuclear weapons. As an active member of the Conference on Disarmament, Bangladesh remains committed to contributing to discussions, deliberations, debates and substantive negotiations on a broad range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

As the Secretary-General has observed in his report on the work of the Organization, disarmament is a critical element of the United Nations strategy for peace and security. We are disturbed to note from the report that the latest figures indicate that global military expenditures increased in 1999 for the first time in the post-cold-war period. Although there has been some progress in the reduction of nuclear weapons, there remains a deep concern within the international community about the continuing risk posed by such weapons.

We are dismayed that the Conference on Disarmament could not engage in substantive work at its recently concluded session, as it failed to reach a consensus on the programme of work. The cap on nuclear proliferation remains unshielded and there are suggestions that the number of threshold States could potentially be on the rise. The controversy over vertical proliferation has also been accentuated by subcritical tests.

There is nevertheless a perceptible and indeed expanding international consensus that favours the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The Russian Federation's ratification of the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and the adoption by consensus of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are two recent encouraging developments in this regard. The Hague Appeal for Peace's call for the delegitimization of war reflects the conscience of humankind. The agreement to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty is also a step forward, as is the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It is now of the utmost importance that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), together with its objectives agreed to at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT, become universally accepted. We urge all nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon-capable States in all regions to pursue in good faith negotiations leading to the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The easy availability of small arms through their illicit transfer, manufacture and circulation is a matter of serious concern. My delegation fully shares the regional and international concern that the easy availability of small arms and light weapons escalates conflicts, undermines political stability and has a devastating impact on peace and security. It is the abundant and ready supply of easy-to-use tools of conflict that is responsible for the fact that an estimated 90 per cent of the deaths and injuries in armed conflicts are among civilians, of whom, shockingly, 80 per cent are women and children. The problem has been exacerbated by the absence of global norms or standards to reduce such accumulation or transfer. We expect that the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held next year, will produce effective measures to ensure that such arms cease to jeopardize human security.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was adopted by an overwhelmingly positive vote at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. A total of 158 countries voted in favour of the resolution, including the five nuclear-weapon States. Bangladesh signed the CTBT on 24 October 1996 and ratified it in March this year. We urge all those countries that have not signed the CTBT to sign it without further delay. As a South Asian nation, Bangladesh hopes that India and Pakistan will soon join the CTBT, in keeping with announcements made by their heads of Government, and thereby free the region of nuclear rivalry.

In keeping with the long-standing position of the Non-Aligned Movement, Bangladesh seeks a zero-

yield, universal and effectively verifiable test-ban treaty with a view to realizing the principles and objectives set for nuclear non-proliferation. As a least developed country, Bangladesh's major concern has been the financial obligations that would devolve to the States parties on account of the implementation of the CTBT, comprising the expenses of the CTBT Preparatory Commission, the CTBT Organization and the verification regime, including the International Monitoring System of the CTBT and the Technical Secretariat. As the coordinator of the least developed countries, Bangladesh has already voiced its concern in the matter in the Conference on Disarmament and in other relevant forums.

As a party to the Biological Weapons Convention, Bangladesh is fully aware of its responsibilities and takes its obligation seriously. By not having developed, acquired or stockpiled biological weapons, Bangladesh is in full compliance with the provisions of the Convention. The full adherence to the Convention of all States would be the ultimate guarantee to ensure the effective elimination of biological weapons. There is therefore a clear need to chart a credible compliance regime.

As for the Chemical Weapons Convention, Bangladesh was among the first to sign it and, although we have no chemical weapons programme or facilities, we ratified it in April 1997. But the ratification of the Convention will have little meaning unless the major chemical-weapons countries join it. We emphasize the necessity of universal adherence to the Convention and call upon all States that have not done so to become States parties to the Convention without delay.

In today's world, regional disarmament presents newer challenges. The continued arms race, contingent upon unresolved problems, is a formidable threat to security and is draining the considerable resources of many countries at the cost of their not being invested in economic development. It is our belief that, while regional confidence-building measures can go a long way, true regional disarmament will largely depend on understanding at the global level and courageous gestures from major Powers.

It is in this connection that we attach high importance to the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Development. My delegation has always urged that these Centres, including the one for Asia and the Pacific, be given sufficient support and resources in order for them to be more active in promoting dialogue on disarmament on the regional and subregional planes.

As regards the Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific, Bangladesh's views are well known. We remain very disappointed to find that, despite repeated decisions of the General Assembly, the Centre is not operating from Kathmandu, its headquarters, and is being run from here in New York. There is no reason for the Centre to be run from New York. Here, we would like to draw attention to the statement of the Foreign Minister of Nepal at the general debate of the plenary last month, wherein he categorically stated that Nepal was fully prepared to meet its obligation to house the Centre in Kathmandu. We are disappointed to see that the Secretary-General's report on the Centre does not provide any positive indication about moving the Centre to Kathmandu. The argument of financial constraint does not seem plausible. The report is silent about the funds required. We would like to know from the Secretariat about the budgetary requirements for the Centre to operate from Kathmandu, so that the matter may be appropriately addressed.

In closing, may I say that disarmament should not be seen as an end in itself. The noble motivation for disarmament — to save humanity from the scourge of war and destruction — should also inspire us to elevate the majority of human beings from the abyss of poverty and deprivation. The savings from a small cut in the military expenditures of major Powers could contribute substantially to the development of the developing countries. Such voluntary cuts in expenditures on arms can increase the dividends on investments in the betterment of the underprivileged of the world. We must pursue this objective with determination and sincerity.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): The Indonesian delegation wishes to express its congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election to preside over our deliberations. We are confident that under your guidance, substantive progress will be made in dealing with the important issues on our agenda. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. Let me avail myself of this opportunity to commend the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, for his lucid statement on various disarmament and security issues.

It is a truism that at the dawn of the new millennium the threat posed by nuclear weapons remains a stark reality. Despite reductions, some 35,000 nuclear weapons still remain in the arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States, many on alert status. We have to acknowledge the reality that these weapons constitute the principal danger to security and humanity's survival. Paradoxically, however, the hopes engendered by the international community for nuclear peace continue to be elusive.

After the Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF), some progress has been made in eliminating nuclear arsenals, under the provisions of START I. The ratification of START II by the Russian Federation last April has opened the way for deeper strategic arms reduction. There is a continuing decline in the number of deployed nuclear weapons. Some nuclear-weapon States have declared that they are no longer producing fissile materials and have taken steps to reduce the threats posed by their nuclear weapons.

But, regrettably, nuclear weapons have made a disturbing comeback. Indeed, their further elimination has come to a virtual standstill. Rather than further deep reductions, some of the nuclear-weapon States are solidifying their stockpiles and consolidating their weapons infrastructure. Modern designs are not only being maintained, but also upgraded to more sophisticated weaponry. The focus continues to be on new rationalizations for the continued possession of nuclear weapons, rather than on abolishing them. Consequently, the nuclear-weapon States have failed to comply with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and have ignored their commitments to systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons globally, in accordance with the decisions taken by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

Hence, the NPT Review Conference held last May was convened in a disquieting atmosphere and exacerbated by a stalemate in the START process; by the uncertainties surrounding the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); by doubts concerning the conclusion of a treaty to ban the use of fissile materials for weapons purposes; and by plans for a national missile defence system which threatened to undo existing arms control agreements, unleash a new nuclear arms race and undermine the NPT.

Although there have been lingering doubts about its outcome, the Review Conference did take decisions of a far-reaching nature. The highlight was, no doubt, the adoption of practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement the 1995 decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. For Indonesia, these practical steps provide criteria for determining progress in fulfilling nuclear-disarmament obligations. In this context, new approaches to nuclear and related issues were agreed on. These new approaches included most notably the implementation of START II and the conclusion of START III as soon as possible; diminishing the future role of such strategic weapons in security arsenals, so as to minimize the risk of their use; confidence-building measures to reduce nuclear dangers; and recognition of the contribution to the abolition of nuclear weapons that was made by the 1996 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion. Thus the progress made, together with agreements on procedural aspects for the next Review Conference, have tended to provide direction for the previously moribund efforts of the past several years and have given rise to a sense of optimism regarding the future viability of the Treaty.

However, the unequivocal commitment to the abolition of nuclear arsenals was not accompanied by a time-frame, and this obligation was again cast in terms of a remote, indefinite future. Consequently, it skirted the critical issues of the extent and pace of negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. A genuine commitment should prepare the ground for more drastic cuts and thereby bolster the efforts for the total elimination of these weapons. Furthermore, a diminishing role for nuclear weapons cannot be realistically contemplated as long as strategic doctrines remain unchanged and nuclear weapons continue to underpin the security of military alliances. The reaffirmation of the first-use of nuclear weapons, the security role of these weapons and even the utility of such weapons as a deterrent to non-nuclear attacks is diametrically opposed to the position taken by the Non-aligned Countries. And, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his report to the Millennium Assembly:

> "The objective of nuclear non-proliferation is not helped by the fact that the nuclear-weapon States continue to insist that those weapons in their hands enhance security, while in the hands of others they are a threat to world peace."

Tactical nuclear arsenals, which constitute more than half of the global stockpile of nuclear warheads, are not covered by any agreement. Although conceived in the context of the cold war, they continue to be maintained on high-alert status, which has lost its rationale. Continued reliance on nuclear armaments for security has rendered these weapons redundant. They have diminished military value and have in fact become obsolete. Still, genuine nuclear disarmament should begin with the elimination of these destabilizing weapons, whose very existence is fraught with the danger of accidental or unauthorized use.

The imperatives of the post-cold-war period also call for transparency with regard to the number of weapons and nuclear materials. Declaring the size of stockpiles, together with plutonium and highly enriched uranium, will enhance the overall transparency of nuclear-weapons programmes, and this will constitute a valuable confidence-building measure. It will also reinforce other initiatives, such as visits to nuclear weapons facilities, lead to a reassessment of nuclear doctrines and a reappraisal of force postures, removing suspicions and enhancing cooperation.

Unilateral reductions will open new frontiers for arms limitation and reinforce bilateral agreements. A fissile-material cut-off treaty would strengthen the legitimacy of the NPT and complement strategic arms reduction treaties by facilitating stockpile reductions and preventing the manufacture of new fissile materials. These measures should be reinforced by the irreversibility of the nuclear-disarmament process, preserving so-called strategic stability, avoiding the introduction of destabilizing weapons and identifying the key elements for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, including verification requirements.

Above all, proposals emanating from countries or groups of countries, including the Group of 21, call for open-ended deliberations on past, existing and future proposals on nuclear and related issues under multilateral auspices. In the new millennium, the importance of the Conference on Disarmament will increase, solidifying its rightful place as the single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament issues.

In order to carry forward the agreements reached and advance the disarmament agenda, the convening of the fourth United Nations special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) has become imperative. The decision by the United Nations General Assembly to convene SSOD IV, which has been impeded in the past, has begun to show to some forward movement. From its vantage position as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission's Working Group on SSOD IV during the period from 1997 to 1999, Indonesia has noted the progress made with regard to the objectives and agenda — which have been the impediments — and to achieving a near consensus on those issues. The objectives would comprise a review and assessment of the international situation in the post-cold war era, and efforts to draw lessons from past endeavours, identify ways and means of meeting new challenges and formulate an agreed plan of action for the future that would strengthen multilateralism in disarmament. With regard to the agenda, all relevant issues in disarmament and security, including nuclear weapons and conventional armaments, should be discussed in all their aspects at the special session.

While taking into account various attempts to limit armaments in the post-cold war period, SSOD IV will streamline those endeavours, assess the implementation or non-implementation of the decisions, resolutions and provisions of treaties and provide us with an opportunity to end the incessant arms race and to achieve disarmament. In these endeavours, the reports of the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament, as well as a review of relevant General Assembly resolutions and the status of negotiations in bilateral and multilateral forums, will provide significant inputs.

Thus, the task facing SSOD IV will be to make progress on issues that have global implications by setting out a broad and comprehensive framework for priorities in arms limitation on the basis of achieving security for all nations through disarmament. This would entail the identification of disarmament measures at the bilateral, subregional, regional and, most importantly, at the global level in tandem with each other. It is on this foundation that future efforts in the field of arms limitation should be pursued so as to serve the legitimate interests and concerns of all States in the new millennium.

Let me add parenthetically that the Assembly, in a major departure from the Disarmament Commission's practice of considering each issue only for a three-year period, mandated the Commission to renew its consideration of this question for an unprecedented fourth consecutive year. This reflects the importance that an overwhelming majority of States attaches to the

early convening of the session as both timely and appropriate. My delegation therefore remains hopeful that it can be achieved. We see SSOD IV with the participation of all Member States as being in the interest of all countries in an effort to limit and eliminate armaments through a balanced agenda that would ensure a substantive outcome. This calls for a flexible and constructive approach to ensure the success of our endeavours. Failure, on the other hand, would have negative consequences for the cause of disarmament and might run the risk of delaying action to an uncertain future. Our collective experience in limiting armaments provides ample evidence that failure to seize an opportunity can result in regrettable delays.

One of the major problems of peace and security during the past decade has been the accumulation and misuse of small arms. Although they do not, by themselves, cause the conflicts in which they are used, their excessive and uncontrolled availability has fostered violence and destabilized States and societies already fraught with political, social and ethnic upheaval. It is feared that the full impact of this phenomenon will be felt even more in the years to come.

Against this backdrop, the forthcoming international conference on small arms trafficking will be called upon to deal with a multiplicity of interrelated issues. The complexities attendant upon the control of small arms go beyond the traditional instruments of arms control and disarmament and call for a comprehensive approach. The dynamics of disarmament and those of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building have to be brought together. Preventive measures, such as restraining the circulation of existing weapons, and reactive measure, such as the collection and destruction of weapons, have to be pursued simultaneously. Problems of security, demobilization, reintegration of combatants and development must be tackled in an integrated and phased manner. The influx of new arms must be prevented through effective border controls to forestall the emergence of new conflicts, as illicit trafficking does not respect national or regional borders.

In view of the comprehensive nature of the problem, a global framework emphasizing new global norms and responsibilities can integrate different perspectives, respond to specific subregional programmes and ensure coherence and consistency in international efforts. Only a global effort can avoid the shift of focus and dilution of effort that characterize many of the efforts until now; it can generate and distribute resources more effectively, develop programmes which do not exist nationally and provide linkages among them.

What is needed is a forward-looking agenda and a programme of action that would put in place global norms to be implemented by all States parties. Given the fact that these weapons are produced, exported and acquired for legitimate national security purposes, it is not appropriate to seek a ban on all types of weapons. Rather, the programme should consist of principles whose implementation will lead to the reduction and prevention of the indiscriminate and unlawful use of these weapons that have caused so much suffering for so many for so long. These principles should define the actions and measures to be taken by the Member States concerned.

In this regard, the Government of Indonesia and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, in cooperation with the Government of Japan, hosted the Jakarta Regional Seminar on Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons last May. It focused attention on the magnitude and scope of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, measures to combat such illicit trafficking and the role of the United Nations in collecting, collating, sharing and disseminating information.

In dealing with this issue, intra- and interregional cooperation, particularly information sharing and coordination, the establishment of an interlocking web of security cooperation, as well as legal controls and regulatory structures, were deemed essential. Concurrently, it would also be necessary for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to build upon existing regional and subregional mechanisms in order to effectively address the illicit trade in small arms and enhance cooperation. Furthermore, although South Asia is less affected by this problem, in this era of globalization no country or subregion can be immune to its profoundly negative consequences.

Finally, the initiation of dialogue and the convening of meetings and conferences have become important modalities to promote regional and subregional cooperation on questions relating to the reduction and elimination of armaments. In this regard,

my delegation commends the programmes undertaken by the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Kathmandu for over a decade. They have facilitated the exploration of new vistas, delineated areas for possible negotiations and agreements and thereby strengthened the prospects for disarmament. For these reasons, the activities of the Centre should be continued.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, I wish sincerely to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Bureau on your election to your respective posts. We are grateful to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for the statement he made yesterday; it constituted a valuable review of the situation with respect to prohibited weaponry and other weapons that affect both regional and international peace, security and stability.

Over the past few years, nuclear arsenals have been reduced owing to the end of the cold war, to unilateral and bilateral efforts by nuclear-weapon States, and to the positive results of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at which the parties unanimously adopted a number of practical steps that bolstered the role of the Disarmament Commission in the gradual elimination of such weapons.

But despite such positive results, it was impossible for the Conference on Disarmament at its recent Geneva session to reach agreement on the process of banning nuclear weapons. This is not consonant with the recommendations and resolutions adopted at the Review Conference or with the Millennium Declaration. Members of the international community, especially nuclear-weapon States, must redouble their efforts, with due transparency, to reduce their arsenals bilaterally and multilaterally and take up the ongoing challenges facing the non-proliferation regime.

Security is the legitimate right of all States. That concept should not be confined only to prohibited weapons; it should apply also to the strengthening of mechanisms of international cooperation in the fields of peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy, which requires a commitment by the international community to norms that can help achieve the desired progress. It is our view also that regional and international security arrangements relating to transparency in weapons acquisitions should be a high priority; they can strengthen confidence, peaceful coexistence and good-neighbourliness.

My country has acceded to the NPT, to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction with a view to strengthening their universality so that the establishment of zones free of weapons of mass destruction can lead to disarmament. Once more, we urge that the Middle East, including the Arab Gulf region, should become a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free of other weapons of mass destruction. We urge the international community to call upon the Israeli Government to accede to the NPT and to place all its nuclear installations under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards in accordance with the relevant internationally binding resolutions and with the provisions adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

We are optimistic about the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects, to be held in 2001. That conference will be of paramount importance in promoting regional and international cooperation and in addressing all aspects of this grave phenomenon taking into account the special characteristics and conditions applying in each region.

Some regions, especially in Africa and in Asia, continue to be plagued by conflict and occupation. This in turn affects both regional and international peace and security, as well as international relations. Peace and stability in the Arab Gulf region cannot come about so long as certain countries of the region continue to acquire prohibited and non-conventional weapons. This has caused a clear military and strategic imbalance in that area. We therefore reaffirm that the achievement of regional peace and security requires the promotion of constructive bilateral and multilateral dialogue among the States of the region on the basis of good-neighbourliness, confidence-building measures, and respect for international law, for the territorial integrity and political independence of States, for non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and for the principle that force should not be used in the settlement of conflicts but that they should be settled

peacefully on the basis of the provisions of the United Nations Charter and of international law.

In conclusion we look forward to a new era in international relations characterized by the non-proliferation of prohibited weapons and weapons of mass destruction, so that mankind may live in peace, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee for the fifty-fifth session. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you and the other members of the Bureau lead the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

In our statement to the Committee last year, we commented on the deepening crisis in international relations, non-proliferation and disarmament and arms control, and on the inability of multilateral forums substantively to address some of the most central issues of our day. In that context, we reiterate our concern over the negative implications, in particular for nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of the testing, development and possible deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems, and retain our firm belief that international peace and security require the involvement of the entire international community. Multilateral engagement is essential. While some opportunities to advance our efforts have been squandered, some events this year have lifted our lagging spirits and faith and have renewed our determination on these issues.

The first was the 2000 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). While the general prognosis had been gloomy, the outcome was a hard-fought compromise that surpassed many expectations. The most significant achievement was the new unequivocal political undertaking given by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and to implement a programme of action containing practical steps that are mutually reinforcing and need to be carried out in a multi-stranded manner. Progress on the implementation of these commitments by the nuclear-weapon States will be the test over the next five years.

Another was the recent, successful second meeting of the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The mine-ban Convention continues to set new standards in disarmament. In less than three years 107 States have ratified or acceded to the Convention — a record-breaking achievement. Stockpiles of anti-personnel mines are swiftly being eradicated and mine-victim casualties are falling, while funding for mine action programmes is increasing. Moreover, the international norm established by the Convention is having a global impact, as trade has almost disappeared and production has declined dramatically.

Furthermore, the inclusive nature of the partnership between Governments and civil society in the creation of the Convention has been maintained and reinforced through the Standing Committee of Experts and the Landmine Monitor. An enormous amount of implementation work has been done effectively through the mechanism of the Standing Committee of Experts with minimum cost implications while the comprehensive annual Monitor Report has proved to be an effective compliance initiative. It is significant that heads of State and Government, during the recently concluded United Nations Millennium Summit, called on all States to consider acceding to the Treaty.

The continuing work by the Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction on a protocol to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the implementation of the Convention is encouraging and nearing completion. South Africa is fully committed to these negotiations achieving the objectives we set at the Special Conference in 1994. We remain convinced that the agreed time-frame for the completion of the protocol is realistic and can be met.

With regard to the Chemical Weapons Convention, my delegation wishes to note that the past year has continued to see a further consolidation of the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The submission by the United States of its industrial declarations in May of this year has significantly strengthened, as well as brought a sense of balance to, the industrial verification regime. The destruction of chemical weapons and related stockpiles has also continued to gather momentum, with some possessor States well ahead of the schedules laid down by the Convention. One possessor State,

however, continues to face significant difficulties with respect to its destruction programme. While it remains the responsibility of each possessor State to ensure the destruction of its stockpile, it is in the interest of all States that these terrible weapons be destroyed. South Africa remains convinced that every effort should be made by all possessor States to ensure the complete and timely destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles. The destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles is a costly and dangerous undertaking, and the efforts of the possessor States, and in particular the Russian Federation, to achieve the goals laid down by the Convention in this regard should be supported to the fullest extent possible.

South Africa remains optimistic that the able leadership of Ambassador Dos Santos of Mozambique, as the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, will result in the international community recognizing its obligation to deal with the issue of small arms and light weapons in a multifaceted manner that includes security, humanitarian and developmental issues. South Africa believes that the success of this Conference will be judged by follow-up actions undertaken in the context of the decisions of the Conference rather than the decisions themselves. The multitude of intensified national and regional initiatives to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons is evidence of the growing political will to effectively and comprehensively address this issue. In this regard, South Africa welcomes the declaration by all heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit that they will take concerted action to end illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, especially by making arms transfers more transparent and by supporting regional disarmament measures.

South Africa is increasingly concerned about the proliferation and excessive accumulation of conventional arms, including small arms and light weapons, in Africa. This proliferation and excessive accumulation are having a debilitating impact on Africa and on the various subregions of the continent. Not only are these weapons being used in internal and intra-State conflicts in Africa, but they are also the weapons of choice of the perpetrators of violent crimes, drug smugglers and poachers long after the conflicts have been resolved. Not only is Africa severely affected by the death, mutilation, destruction and crime caused by small arms, but the proliferation and illicit trafficking of these weapons have a direct and negative impact on the African renaissance. One of the cornerstones of the African renaissance in striving for socio-economic development, democratization and good governance in Africa is stability and security on the continent. This security and stability cannot be accomplished without combating the proliferation of conventional arms, as well as small arms and light weapons and their illicit trafficking, and without dealing with the issue comprehensively on both the demand and the supply side.

An issue that is of particular importance in combating the illicit trade in these weapons is the promotion of the removal of arms from society and the destruction of surplus arms. South Africa has adopted policies that give preference to the destruction of redundant and obsolete small arms, rather than selling them, as an important part of the Government's comprehensive strategy to prevent, combat and eradicate the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms.

As a practical manifestation of that policy, South Africa, with the generous assistance and cooperation of the Government of Norway, was recently able to initiate the process of destroying over a quarter of a million redundant small arms from its military stockpile.

South Africa attaches importance to the role of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons as an instrument of international humanitarian law. South Africa believes that a renewed focus should be placed on that Convention as a viable instrument that could proactively address various conventional weapons deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. South Africa views it as important that the Convention's review conference scheduled for 2001 address those issues that would improve the effective implementation of the Convention, rather than reopen existing protocols. In that regard, consideration should be given to addressing issues pertaining to extending the scope of the application of the Convention to be in conformity with that of amended Protocol II as well as an effective verification mechanism, which the Convention lacks. In addition, a process should be launched to urgently consider and develop an additional protocol to deal with explosive remnants of war.

The inability of the Conference on Disarmament to undertake substantive work again this year, and the fact that most First Committee resolutions do not enjoy the support of all Member States and that the work of the Disarmament Commission is often ignored, are reasons for concern. Part of the problem is that the disarmament mechanisms that were created 22 years ago do not reflect today's realities. Our institutions and mechanisms, their membership, financial implications and methods of work are in need of serious re-evaluation and overhaul.

South Africa will again, along with its partners and cosponsors of the New Agenda, share in the submission of a draft resolution to the First Committee. That draft resolution provides a bridge upon which the overwhelming majority of States should be able join together towards a world free of nuclear weapons. South Africa will also, along with its cosponsors, share in the submission of a draft resolution on illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, in the hope that it will be adopted without a vote, as it was last year. Furthermore, in our capacity as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, we will participate in the submission of draft resolutions that are of specific concern to the Movement. South Africa remains committed to working in the First Committee and in all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums so as to achieve the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, and the limitation of the numbers of conventional weapons to the minimum required for self-defence.

Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, please allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that, with your experience and diplomatic skills, you will guide this session to success. The Chinese delegation would like to assure you that it will fully cooperate with you and other members of the Bureau, and that we will make our contribution to the success of the Committee. I also wish to avail myself of this opportunity to express my appreciation for the excellent work done by the Chairman of the last session, Ambassador González.

This session of the First Committee is being held at the turn of the century and at the dawn of a new millennium. International arms control and the disarmament process have come to a crucial crossroads. The international situation is undergoing profound changes. Despite twists and turns, multipolarization is gaining momentum, and economic globalization is bringing about closer economic and trade ties between States. Meanwhile, negative factors affecting global and regional peace and stability still exist and are even growing; the world is far from being tranquil. A certain country, emboldened by its military, scientific and technological superiority, tends to pursue unilateralism in international affairs and attempts to seek absolute security. This hampers the sound, sustained development of the international disarmament process.

History has proved that security is both relative and mutual. One country cannot achieve true security unless that security is based on the common security of all countries. Nowadays, with the existence of frequent communications and closer ties between States, countries of the world increasingly share more common interests while facing more common challenges. Interdependence between States has reached an unprecedented level in both depth and scope. Under such circumstances, attempts to seek so-called absolute security for oneself at the expense of other countries will definitely go nowhere and benefit nobody.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which was signed in 1972 by the United States and the former Soviet Union, constitutes a cornerstone of global strategic stability, and its significance goes far beyond the bilateral relations between the United States and Russia. That Treaty has a direct bearing on the security interests of all countries, and should be strictly observed. Any attempt to violate the Treaty, under whatever disguise, will seriously undermine the global strategic balance and stability, jeopardize trust between States and produce far-reaching negative impacts on international peace and security and the multilateral disarmament and arms control process.

The fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled "Preservation of and compliance with the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems". That demonstrates that most countries in the world hope to maintain global strategic balance and stability. They wish to preserve the efforts made and the achievements attained in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation since the end of the cold war. They are reluctant to see trust and cooperation between States jeopardized by a national missile defence system.

We have taken note of the recent decision by the President of the United States not to deploy a national missile defence system at this time. That is a wise decision. Nevertheless, we have also noticed that the national missile defence programme has not yet been abandoned and that, in fact, research and development still continue on that system. As an important forum for international security and disarmament, the First Committee should pay serious attention to this issue.

At this General Assembly session, China will join Russia, Belarus and other countries in submitting for the second time a draft resolution on the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. We seek the support of more countries for that draft resolution, so as to contribute to the maintenance of the global strategic balance and stability in a spirit of sincerity and cooperation. We also hope that the United States will heed the appeals of the international community, consult other countries on this issue, and abandon the national missile defence programme as soon as possible, as that programme serves no one's interests.

Outer space is the common heritage of humankind, and its peaceful exploitation our common aspiration. The prevention of an arms race and the prohibition of weapon systems in outer space will not only avert wars in outer space but also make a crucial contribution to the maintenance of peace and stability on Earth. Some claim that there is no arms race in outer space at present. But what worries us is that a certain country is seeking military superiority in outer space and thereby strategic superiority on Earth. This is a fact, and the process is ongoing. Should this negative trend not be checked, the near future could bring the weaponization of, or even an arms race in, outer space.

History teaches us, as the old saying goes, that a stitch in time saves nine. The objective of arms control is, first of all, to prevent the emergence of weapon systems that could undermine global stability and to avert an arms race that could be triggered by such weapon systems. Whether there is, in fact, an arms race in outer space at this stage should not constitute the decisive factor in determining whether the international community should address the danger of the weaponization of, or an arms race in, outer space. Nor should it be an excuse for certain countries to block negotiations leading to the conclusion of legal instruments on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Humankind would pay a much higher price if it were to take action only after an arms race in outer space had become a reality.

In this connection, we were pleased to note that, at the recent Millennium Summit, President Putin of the Russian Federation proposed the convening of an international conference in 2001 on the prevention of the militarization of outer space. We support this initiative and hope the international community will respond positively.

Recent changes in the international situation have once again highlighted the issue of missiles. Despite differing views on the threat posed by missiles, an increasing number of countries are realizing that it has become urgent for the international community to address this question. China believes that the issue is a complex and global one, and that any unilateral approach or measures detrimental to global strategic stability could only aggravate rather than resolve the problem. Any discriminatory cartel-style control measures would not offer any long-term solutions, though they might ease the problem temporarily. To resolve this issue definitively, all countries, and especially military Powers and military groups, should strictly abide by the Charter of the United Nations and other norms governing international relations; seek to settle international disputes by peaceful means; and refrain from interference in the internal affairs of other countries. This would create the favourable international security environment necessary for the resolution of the missile issue.

Secondly, an open, non-discriminatory global missile control regime should be established to provide uniform international criteria to guide the practices of all countries. We support the role of the United Nations, the most representative international Organization, in examining all aspects of the question of missiles in a comprehensive and objective manner.

The successful conclusion this year of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), at which a Final Document was adopted, represents a milestone in the field of international security and arms control. In the wake of a series of heavy blows to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, such as the nuclear tests in South Asia and the refusal by a major country to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the success of the NPT Review Conference takes on even greater importance.

It demonstrates the common will and determination of the international community to preserve the system of legal instruments regulating international arms control and non-proliferation. The outcome of the Conference will help promote the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation process.

At the sixth NPT Review Conference, the five nuclear-weapon States, for the first time in history, made a collective and unequivocal commitment to eliminate their nuclear arsenals and pledged not to target their nuclear weapons against any State. We hope that these commitments will give a new impetus to the global nuclear disarmament process. In this connection, we welcome the ratification of START II and its relevant protocols by the Russian Duma, and we urge the other State party to the Treaty to complete its ratification procedure as soon as possible so as to achieve the early entry into force and implementation of the Treaty.

We also hope that the two States will negotiate and conclude new nuclear-arms-reduction treaties at an early date. This would create the necessary conditions for other nuclear-weapon States to join the nuclear disarmament process and facilitate the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free world. I would like to emphasize that the principle of irreversibility should apply to the nuclear disarmament process. The nuclear weapons eliminated under disarmament agreements should be destroyed. Simply transferring nuclear warheads from deployment to reserve status while keeping them in constant readiness for future redeployment cannot be regarded as genuine nuclear disarmament.

China, as a nuclear-weapon State, has never evaded its responsibility and duties in the area of nuclear disarmament. China has consistently advocated the complete prohibition and total destruction of nuclear weapons, and it has unconditionally undertaken not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones.

China maintains a limited and efficient nuclear force for the purpose of deterring any nuclear attack against it. China's nuclear weapons do not pose a threat to any country. China has always supported international nuclear disarmament efforts, and we are in favour of dealing with nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. China took an active part in the CTBT negotiations and was among the first group of States to sign the Treaty. The Chinese Government has already submitted the CTBT to the National People's Congress for review and approval. We hope that the process of ratification of the Treaty by the Congress will go smoothly, but we also expect the other countries concerned to create the necessary external conditions for the ratification.

China understands the wishes of the large number of non-nuclear-weapon States on the issue of nuclear transparency. We are in favour of adopting appropriate and necessary transparency measures within the framework of the process of the elimination of nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, however, we believe that in addressing this issue, the tremendous differences between nuclear-weapon States on nuclear strategy, nuclear force and the security environment should be taken into consideration. Different States should be allowed to adopt different transparency measures at different stages. Only in that way can nuclear transparency measures truly enhance mutual trust and promote security. The safeguarding and strengthening of strategic stability and undiminished security for all States are basic principles that must be followed.

China maintains that the early conclusion of a protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) will be conducive to the strengthening and improvement of the international regime for the non-proliferation and elimination of weapons of mass destruction. China is in favour of concluding the protocol negotiations before the convening of the fifth BWC Review Conference. It is important, however, to conclude a good protocol. To achieve such a goal, all parties should make joint efforts and demonstrate the necessary flexibility. The protocol negotiations should follow the principle of equality and strike a balance between rights and obligations. Declaration and verification measures should be formulated according to objective, just and scientific criteria instead of the prejudice or subjective judgement of a few countries. Any attempt by such countries to inspect others while exempting themselves, or to conduct more inspections of others and fewer of themselves, will only hamper negotiations and lead them astray.

Promoting international cooperation in the field of biology is an important aspect for comprehensively enhancing the effectiveness of the BWC. The countries concerned should undertake to abolish those export control cartels that are incompatible with the BWC and its protocol. This issue relates to equal rights for the

States parties and the future universality of the protocol. Its proper settlement, therefore, will have a decisive impact on whether the protocol can be concluded.

We are pleased to note that the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has been generally good, despite various difficulties since its entry into force three years ago. This has been achieved as a result of the consistent support of the international community for the chemical weapons disarmament process and the hard work of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The Chinese Government will, as always, continue to implement its legal obligations under the Convention comprehensively, seriously and strictly, so as to contribute to the early fulfilment of the purposes and objectives of the CWC.

It is of major concern for China to seek the speedy and thorough elimination of all the chemical weapons abandoned by Japanese troops in China, which are posing a serious threat to the Chinese people and the environment. Since the Chinese and Japanese Governments signed a memorandum in July 1999 on the destruction of the abandoned chemical weapons, the two countries have cooperated well and made some progress in this field. However, the destruction process is already behind the schedule provided for in the Convention. We expect the Japanese Government to make further efforts to thoroughly resolve this issue as soon as possible.

In recent years, the grave threat posed by small arms — especially by the illicit manufacture of and trafficking and trade in small arms — to social development, civilian safety and regional security has become a common concern of the international community. Efforts have been made at the national, regional and global levels to resolve the problem. Some countries and regions have taken a series of unilateral or multilateral measures in the light of their local conditions. Negotiations on the firearms protocol to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime will be resumed this month in Vienna, with a view to its early conclusion. The international Conference on the Illicit Trade In Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will be held next year.

China is very concerned about the suffering caused by small arms in the countries — especially developing countries — and regions concerned. We fully understand the concern of those countries about this problem and appreciate the efforts they have made to resolve it. Proceeding from this position, China has actively participated in multilateral efforts to address the issue of small arms. It is our view that to resolve the complex issue of small arms, first, the international community should urge all countries to improve and strengthen relevant national measures, in the light of their own conditions, to keep small arms under effective control. Secondly, the international community should not limit its efforts to the problem itself; more efforts should be made to eliminate the source of the problem. Thirdly, all countries, regions and international organizations should further strengthen their communication, coordination and cooperation. Fourthly, State sovereignty should be respected, and the legitimate manufacture, possession and transfer of small arms should be protected.

Like other delegations, the Chinese delegation is deeply disappointed and very concerned that the Conference on Disarmament has once again failed to carry out substantive work this year. As the single global multilateral disarmament negotiating body, the Conference on Disarmament cannot carry out its work in a vacuum. Any change in the international security situation will certainly have an influence on its work. Disarmament should contribute to the enhancement of universal security for all countries. It should not, instead, be exploited by a few countries to strengthen their own military superiority while restricting or weakening the defence capabilities of other countries or depriving them of such a capability. This principle must, of course, be reflected in the work of the Conference.

China believes that a fissile material cut-off treaty will be conducive to nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It therefore supports the early commencement and conclusion of the cut-off treaty negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. Our position on this issue remains unchanged. At the same time, a series of negative developments, including, in particular, a setback for the CTBT and the attempt to overthrow the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and develop a national missile defence system, make people worry that the principles and objectives of the fissile material cut-off treaty are being compromised.

The General Assembly has, for many years, adopted by an overwhelming majority resolutions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. The

resolutions clearly reiterate that the Conference on Disarmament should play a key role in negotiating multilateral instruments on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and request the Conference on Disarmament to set up, as early as possible, an ad hoc committee on outer space. No country has ever voted against this resolution in recent years. Only a very few countries have obstructed the Conference on Disarmament from carrying out work on this issue in accordance with the General Assembly resolutions. China believes that, as global strategic balance and stability are under threat and an arms race in outer space is imminent, the prevention of such a race is more urgent and important than the negotiations on a cut-off treaty.

In view of this, the Conference on Disarmament should at least deal with the three major disarmament issues, namely, outer space, nuclear disarmament and the cut-off treaty, in a balanced manner. China hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to work out a comprehensive and balanced work programme next year, so as to initiate negotiations on the three issues as early as possible.

Disarmament and security always complement each other. A favourable international security environment is a prerequisite for the steady advancement of international disarmament efforts. Progress in the disarmament field gives impetus to the improvement of the international security situation. Looking back over the past five decades, we can clearly see that international arms control and disarmament efforts have never ceased, despite dramatic changes in the international situation. Achievements, from the NPT and the ABM Treaty, concluded during the cold war era, to the CWC and CTBT, reached after the cold war, all demonstrate humankind's unremitting pursuit of international peace and security through arms control and disarmament. These arms control treaties constitute an important part of the global architecture of collective security established after the Second World War. They have played, and will continue to play, a significant role in creating a stable and predictable international security environment.

Any approach to dismiss treaties concluded by the international community after so many years as "products of the cold war" or to call for their abandonment is neither fair nor wise.

At present, the problem facing us is not whether we should abandon existing international arms control treaties, but rather how to consolidate existing arms control and disarmament achievements, deepen international cooperation in this field and proceed to negotiate and conclude new arms control treaties. As a peace-loving country, China sincerely supports international arms control and disarmament efforts. Since ancient times, the Chinese people have adopted the philosophy of "peace is precious". They hope that the world is at peace and that they can live in harmony with people of other countries. To concentrate its efforts on its modernization drive, China needs a long-term peaceful and stable international environment. China wishes to join efforts with other countries to promote the steady and sound development of international arms control and the disarmament process.

Mr. Noboru (Japan): At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I would like, on behalf of the Japanese delegation, to extend to you my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly during its fifty-fifth session. I am confident that, with the benefit of your broad experience in the field of disarmament and demonstrated diplomatic skill, the Committee will conduct its work in a most efficient and productive manner. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you discharge your important responsibilities.

At the recent Millennium Summit of the United Nations General Assembly, heads of State and Government from around the world declared that they would spare no effort to free their peoples from the scourge of war and would strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. Without getting into all the specifics and details, they sent a clear and simple message that should be repeated until our arms control and disarmament goals are achieved and people throughout the world can live in peace and security.

In addressing this Committee last year, my predecessor noted a series of recent setbacks in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and stressed the need to reverse that discouraging trend. With the successful conclusion of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), I believe that negative trend has in

fact been stemmed. The Final Document that was unanimously adopted at the Review Conference is testimony to the determination of the world community to maintain and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We must not lose this momentum. Indeed, it is incumbent upon us to implement practical measures for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as called for in the Final Document of the Review Conference.

I believe that this Millennium General Assembly should take practical steps towards the total elimination of nuclear arsenals. From this point of view, as our Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori explained at the Millennium Summit, Japan has decided to introduce a new draft resolution that marks paths to be taken towards the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons. The previous resolutions sponsored by Japan also set out steps that would lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons. This year, however, I believe we can better elaborate and define the road map, taking into account the agreement reached at the NPT Review Conference.

The most important goal at this juncture is the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The fact that, of the 44 States whose ratifications are required for its entry into force, 14 States, including two of the nuclear-weapon States, have not yet ratified the Treaty underscores the need for the world community to strengthen its efforts in this regard. When we consider that four years have passed since the opening of the Treaty for signature, it might now be useful to set a specific target year for its entry into force. Japan, for its part, has been tirelessly promoting the ratification of the CTBT for the countries concerned. As coordinator of the second conference for the facilitation of ratification, Japan has also been working in Vienna with other States. I am encouraged by the efforts being made to develop a broad consensus on getting the Governments of the two countries in South Asia that conducted nuclear test explosions to sign the Treaty. I would like to call upon both of them to demonstrate strong leadership and to sign the Treaty as soon as possible.

Secondly, at its session next year the Conference on Disarmament should begin the negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, based on the Shannon Report (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein. It is truly regrettable that, despite agreeing twice in the past to begin such negotiations, the Conference on Disarmament remains stalled. I believe that next year will be critical in terms of maintaining the Conference's credibility. Building on the serious efforts made by successive presidents, the Conference on Disarmament should expeditiously reach agreement on its programme of work and commence the actual negotiations on the Fissile Materials Cut-Off Treaty with a view to concluding them before 2005.

Thirdly, the reduction of the United States and Russian strategic offensive arms is also of critical importance. The Japan-sponsored General Assembly resolutions of past years have consistently addressed the need to accelerate the START process, including the full implementation of START I, the early entry into force of START II and the early commencement and conclusion of START III. Although the process is now at a standstill, I acknowledge the efforts being made by both countries to engage in consultations. In this connection, we appreciate the United States Government's postponement of its decision to deploy a national missile defence system and to engage in further dialogue on this important issue. I hope that both Governments will continue efforts to reach agreement so that the international community may witness a revitalized nuclear disarmament process rather than face the danger of succumbing to a vicious circle in the arms race.

The Final Document of the NPT Review Conference also stipulates a number of steps to be taken by all the nuclear-weapon States, such as further unilateral efforts to reduce their nuclear arsenals, the engagement of all the nuclear-weapon States in the process leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons and increased transparency with regard to the nuclear weapons capabilities. Although I will not reiterate each of them here, let me emphasize that they are all indispensable steps that will lead us to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Fourthly, Japan fully endorses the further development of verification capabilities to ensure a nuclear weapon-free world, as envisaged in the NPT Final Document. Japan stresses the importance, at this particular juncture, of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Model Protocol and welcomes the resolution adopted on 22 September at the IAEA General Conference containing elements of a plan of action to promote and facilitate the conclusion and entry into force of safeguards agreements and additional protocols.

The draft text of Japan's resolution, which contains all the elements I have just mentioned, will be formally introduced in due course. It is our intention to seek its adoption with the widest possible support.

The second item to which Japan attaches great importance is small arms. The excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of these arms continue to take a grave toll in human life and to cause tremendous suffering in many parts of the world. It is encouraging that various global, regional and national initiatives and measures have been taken to cope with this problem. The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects scheduled for next year should provide a valuable opportunity to consolidate and further strengthen such efforts, as well as an occasion to promote international cooperation in dealing with this problem.

Japan has taken the initiative of introducing several General Assembly resolutions on small arms since 1995 and has made substantial contributions to various international activities in this area, especially within the framework of the United Nations. Those contributions include the establishment of the United Nations Panel and the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and donations of more than $3.5 million in support of United Nations activities.

We intend to continue to play a key role by, for example, presenting for the presidency of the United Nations Conference on small arms next year a candidate with excellent expertise and experience — Ambassador Mitsuro Donowaki — who chaired both aforementioned United Nations groups of governmental experts, which produced two highly valuable reports in 1997 and 1999. Furthermore, in order to facilitate the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference, Japan will introduce in this Committee a draft decision on the date and venue of the Conference. Its text will be formally submitted to the Secretariat in due course.

Japan is also concerned about the ongoing proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. This trend is threatening peace and stability in different regions and is affecting the security of the entire world. It will be the task of the international community in the twenty-first century to counter this new challenge. In this connection, Japan welcomes the statement made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it would suspend missile launches while its high-level talks with the United States are under way and calls upon it to continue that suspension.

I will now briefly touch upon other items which are also on the agenda of this Committee. First, Japan believes that the negotiations on a protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) should be concluded before the BWC Review Conference is convened next year. There are more than a few unresolved issues and all States concerned should make further efforts to bridge their differences.

Secondly, with regard to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, Japan strongly hopes that a resolution endorsing the Secretary-General's report will be adopted with overwhelming support. I might add in this connection that we welcome the participation of Uzbekistan in the Register, which enhances the usefulness of this mechanism as an international confidence-building measure.

Thirdly, the Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, held this September in Geneva, addressed the problem of the continued use of these weapons. Japan has long been involved in efforts to deal with this problem and will continue to make major contributions to international initiatives until the goal of "zero victims" is achieved.

Finally, Japan pays particular attention to the work being done by the three United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament. I highly appreciate the Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific for its constructive role, particularly in the preparation of an agreement on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

I would like to conclude my statement by reiterating my full confidence in your ability, Mr. Chairman, to lead our work in such a way that will achieve significant results. I can assure you of my delegation's full cooperation throughout your tenure.

Mr. Valdez Carrillo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of your important post. I extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

who, led by you, will guide the work of their important Committee to a successful conclusion.

We are embarking on a new session following a year that could be described as paradoxical in matters of disarmament. The year 2000 has seen agreements and progress on some significant issues, but it has also been characterized by paralysis and stagnation on others. Important disarmament treaties, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, have been strengthened as a result of the follow-up processes established by the parties themselves. However, we have also seen a lack of action and the resumed indefinite postponement of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and other important legal instruments. Moreover, unilateral actions have been taken that are inconsistent with established commitments, thus weakening certain basic legal instruments.

These developments and events generally reflect a difficult and complex situation, as well as a challenge to those of us who are committed to the wider and more ambitious goal of total disarmament.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, we must stress the expectations that have arisen from the NPT Review Conference, at which a consensus was reached between the States parties. The Final Document expresses a clear commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to the total elimination of their arsenals. This helped to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and to revitalize the ongoing objective of the Treaty ultimately to achieve general and complete disarmament.

However, some problems remain, such as the reaffirmation of nuclear strategic doctrines based on exclusively unilateral approaches; the lack of concrete measures to promote general disarmament and of legally binding security guarantees for non-nuclear-weapon States on the non-use of nuclear weapons; and the ongoing state of alert of many of these arsenals.

This situation should be reversed. The proposals of the Secretary-General, endorsed by the heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit, could serve as the basis for such a change. They include the possibility of convening an international conference to decide appropriate ways to eliminate nuclear threats.

The actions undertaken by Peru in this context include its assumption on 1 July of the vice-presidency of and coordinating role for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Preparatory Commission for the establishment of an International Monitoring System for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). My country is committed to the regional mandate, the first task of which will be to promote that instrument in order to obtain the ratifications necessary to its entry into force. Last December, Peru also hosted the annual General Conference of the States members of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and has supported with practical measures the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, aimed at preventing nuclear proliferation in that region.

Peru, as a member of the first inhabited nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world, stresses the importance of the establishment of such zones because of their significant contribution to the promotion of peace and regional and world security. In this respect, we have firmly demonstrated the need to strengthen the concept of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere based on existing nuclear-weapon-free zones established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Bangkok and Rarotonga. This would be a concrete step to promote nuclear non-proliferation and to strengthen of a universal nuclear-weapon-free regime.

That would also facilitate coordination on such common issues as the fight against pollution of the environment by radioactive wastes, the strengthening of the rules for the transport of such wastes, the protection of the marine habitat and the development of contingency plans, among a number of important measures.

Furthermore, in the past year we have been concerned about the proposal to deploy an anti-ballistic missile system, which would undoubtedly affect the commitments made under the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. It would also have negative effects on the climate of trust required to implement the gradual processes of reducing nuclear weapons and pursuing worldwide disarmament.

At the same time, we must note with satisfaction the recent announcement by the President of the United States of the postponement of the development of this

system. We hope that as a result the integrity and validity of the ABM Treaty will be preserved.

Peru would like to highlight the importance of the international Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, to be held in 2001. This is a particularly important issue for our country, because such weapons raise the level of violence by various criminal organizations within States, which at times poses a real threat to internal and regional security, with the principal victims being defenceless civilians.

Peru reaffirms its resolve to promote and encourage an international consensus in this regard. In Latin America these problems are closely linked to organized crime, subversion and drug trafficking, which are very harmful and destructive for our peoples. In this connection, in Peru we have developed a legal framework for penalizing illegal possession of firearms and regulating their acquisition and possession.

To deal with such problems, it is essential to establish international cooperation measures aimed at reducing and then preventing the proliferation and excessive accumulation of these weapons and to fight against and stop illicit trafficking in them. However, solutions should take into account the specific characteristics of each State.

Regarding other areas of disarmament, Peru also recognizes the importance of continuing to work for the final eradication of anti-personnel landmines. We welcome the holding last September of the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention. The persistence of these weapons exacerbates tensions, undermines confidence and makes all diplomatic efforts to find peaceful solutions to conflicts more difficult. Landmines are also a real threat to thousands of innocent civilians who may fall victim to them.

The result of the Meeting is a clear manifestation of the political will of States to continue making progress towards the universalization of the Convention and the complete prohibition of these indiscriminate weapons. We learned at the Meeting of the significant progress that has been made and the concrete results that have been achieved in demining and the destruction of stocks of mines. Twenty-two States have already concluded this latter process.

Because of its own experience, Peru is committed to the total elimination of these weapons and will support, as in past years, a declaration by the Assembly urging all States to sign, ratify or adhere to the Ottawa Convention as soon as possible.

The Government of Peru would also like to highlight the important role that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has its headquarters in Lima, is playing and can continue to play as a forum for discussion and the promotion of consensus on joint action concerning key issues on the international agenda. It is important to highlight the Secretary-General's statement in his last report (A/55/169) on the Centre that it has launched projects aimed at furthering the understanding of the relationship between security and development, enhanced the role of the Organization as a regional catalyst for activities on peace and disarmament, and acted as a politically neutral platform for discussions on security and development issues. This capacity, however, depends on the provision of sufficient resources to allow the Centre to fulfil its objectives. We urge Member States — particularly the States of Latin American and the Caribbean — to continue contributing to the strengthening of the Centre and to its programme of work.

We must make progress on the adoption of confidence-building measures as the basis for regional and general disarmament, which can help redirect the massive financial resources now being used for security purposes to the promotion of the well-being and development of all the peoples of the world. These measures, along with the establishment of a favourable and equitable international economic system, will decisively benefit the human person to the promotion of development and international peace and security.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, and through you Myanmar, on your well-deserved election to Chair the work of this Committee. We are convinced that with your acknowledged skill you will be able to ensure the success of our work. I can assure you that the Committee will continue to have the cooperation of my delegation. We congratulate the other members of the Bureau, and express our gratitude to the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Raimundo González of Chile, for his outstanding leadership during the last session.

Over the past 50 years Costa Rica has made disarmament a central focus of its daily activities. We

are a country without arms and without an army. Our children have never seen a helicopter gunship, a tank or a warship. In our country we have schools, not barracks. Costa Rica has not entrusted its national security to the force of arms; rather, my country has placed its trust in international law and multilateral mechanisms. Costa Rica's sole security guarantee is the prohibition on the use of force incorporated in the Charter of the United Nations; we have placed our protection in the hands of this Organization and its multilateral mechanisms. At the same time, we have recognized that every manifestation of the drive to possess weapons is contrary to the objectives of peace, security and development, which should guide international relations in the modern world. Today we are seeing how the accumulation of weapons and munitions is a real obstacle to peace and a direct threat to the security of all the nations that, like Costa Rica, are true peace-lovers.

As a result, the pursuit of general and complete disarmament through legally binding international instruments is of the greatest importance to my country. These instruments are the fundamental pillars of an increasingly safe and stable world in which all the members of the international community assume their responsibility for building a better world for all. To this end, we believe that the codification and adoption of new international standards in the field of disarmament should be given the highest priority on the international agenda. Costa Rica is attempting to participate actively in this process of codification and in the progressive development of international standards on disarmament. This is why today we are trying to find an appropriate place in the main bodies charged with this responsibility, such as the Conference on Disarmament, the specialized multilateral forum for promoting disarmament in all its forms.

In the Millennium Declaration, adopted less than a month ago, our heads of State and Government solemnly promised to "spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war", and to this end they reaffirmed their commitment to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, end the illicit arms trade, and support regional disarmament efforts. Our mandate is clear. This Committee should implement these instructions that emanate directly from the highest political authorities of the international community. We cannot present excuses or objections.

That is why we should follow the example of our heads of State, who called on all those States that have not yet ratified the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines to do so as soon as possible. Costa Rica firmly supports the various projects aimed at eradicating once and for all this type of cruel and indiscriminate weapon. We believe that it is necessary for the international community to continue supporting mine clearance programmes and programmes aimed at providing assistance to victims and education to populations at risk.

The indiscriminate sale of weapons facilitates and encourages political instability and the violation of human rights. Arsenals of small arms prolong armed conflicts and make peace processes difficult. Furthermore, the availability of light weapons intensifies the degree of violence of common crimes. In the face of this reality, we should take full advantage of the opportunity that will be offered by the International Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to elaborate binding norms to combat the trafficking and illicit production of small and light arms. At that Conference, which will be held next year, we should adopt practical and concrete measures in order to prevent the transfer of weapons, ammunition, military technology and dual-use technology to areas of conflict and non-democratic regimes that violate human rights, support terrorism or commit acts of aggression.

In line with the mandate of our heads of State, we should design mechanisms to collect, confiscate and destroy surplus small weapons. It is necessary for us to introduce a system of information and verification to guarantee that properly authorized transfers of weapons will not be diverted towards illicit ends. It is essential for us to reduce the production capacity for weapons and to start a serious process of conversion of the arms industry. Furthermore, we should institute controls and limits on the production, possession and trading of small arms within each of our jurisdictions, in order to prevent them from being used for purposes of crime, terrorism or insurgency.

It is worrying that the main exporters of weapons, paradoxically, are the permanent members of the Security Council and the main industrialized Powers. They have a special responsibility in relation to maintaining international peace and security. We believe, in this context, that it is essential for countries that produce and market weapons to exercise effective

control on their exports and to adopt firm measures to combat the manufacture of arms and their illegal trafficking.

In order to stop illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition, it is necessary to organize, at both the worldwide and regional levels, a multinational campaign of cooperation and international assistance aimed at strengthening customs and border controls, at increasing coordination with police forces and at identifying all weapons available. In this respect, we have submitted for the consideration of all delegations a draft international code of conduct on arms transfers. This was drafted by 19 Nobel Peace Prize-winning individuals and institutions, including the former President of Costa Rica, Mr. Oscar Arias Sánchez. This document is available under the symbol A/54/766, published on 24 February 2000.

Costa Rica pleads for the prohibition of the transfer of military material and personnel as well as financial and logistic support to States whose military, paramilitary or security forces participate in or contribute to the violation of human rights. We feel that this prohibition should be extended also to States that do not respect the minimum democratic and civil guarantees. The export of weapons should be banned to countries that do not report their transfers to the United Nations, as well as to States that have not signed the main instruments on human rights, international humanitarian law and disarmament. We are convinced that all of these measures should be incorporated in a binding international agreement.

We are fully aware of the danger of certain transnational criminal activities for the smallest and most vulnerable countries. That is why we support the initiative of the small island States to eradicate criminal activities threatening their stability and security. We also support the initiative to declare the Caribbean a zone of peace.

Costa Rica condemns in all circumstances the use, possession, threat of use and development of nuclear weapons. We believe that from an ethical and legal point of view, there is no situation at all that justifies or legitimizes the existence of this type of weapon of mass destruction. No State has the right to endanger the survival of the human race.

We strongly and vigorously appeal to all countries that have not yet become parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty or the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to accede to these instruments as soon as possible without conditions. The universalization of these Treaties is indispensable to guarantee global security. We welcome the positive results of the NPT Review Conference held this year and reaffirm that non-proliferation should be accompanied by a gradual system of commitments culminating in total nuclear disarmament. Only full nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control will produce global security. In this respect, we advocate the convening at an early date of an international conference to examine how nuclear dangers could be eliminated, as is recommended in the Millennium Declaration.

We also reiterate the need for the nuclear Powers to exercise the greatest caution in order to avoid new sources of tension or mistrust. In this regard, we cannot hide our concern over the design and study of anti-missile defence systems. Outer space should be reserved for peaceful activities to the benefit of all humankind.

Costa Rica, as a member of the Latin American Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, firmly supports the creation and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. My country is proud to be party to the historic Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established for the first time a zone of this type, and we appreciate the positive contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to peace and global security. That is why we appeal strongly to the international community to heed the desire of States that want to create new zones of this type.

Finally, we must remember the multifaceted and positive relationship between disarmament and development. The reduction of military expenditures is particularly important for developing States. Our resources are scarce, and we cannot mismanage them. We should invest intensively and systematically in our human resources. We should fight for economic development, social justice and democratic institutions. In this context, armies are a heavy burden on our budgets, apart from being a constant source of tension and repression. Today we urge that economic resources used by the world for conventional and nuclear weapons be used to promote better economic and social development, as well as equity among all peoples. This is the real task of this Committee.

Mr. Bebars (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to convey to you, Sir, my sincere congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at this session. I am confident that your leadership will be most effective and successful. I would also like to express our sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Raimundo González, for his exceptional leadership of the First Committee during the fifty-fourth session, and to extend my congratulations to all the members of the Bureau.

I am hopeful that a positive spirit will dominate this year's work of the First Committee, such as that which prevailed during the work of the sixth Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. That spirit enabled us to reach consensus and adopt the Final Document of the Conference, which encompassed unprecedented tangible results towards non-proliferation and disarmament in the field of nuclear weapons.

At the outset of the work of the First Committee on the disarmament issues on its agenda, we think it necessary to stress the priorities of the international community in the field of disarmament as clearly set out in the 1978 Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which gave utmost priority in efforts towards general disarmament to nuclear weapons, followed by other weapons of mass destruction, then by conventional weapons. Within the framework of our commitments, those are the priorities that should guide our work. In that context, we aspire to speedy agreement on the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in the very near future.

With the end of the cold war, people aspired to a new era characterized by peace, security and stability, an era in which the spectre of nuclear war and the threat of the total annihilation of humanity would vanish, an era in which the international community would abandon obsolete military doctrines based on the principle of nuclear deterrence. Regrettably, nuclear weapons and military nuclear arsenals continue to proliferate, and advanced nuclear programmes that fall beyond the scope of safeguards measures persist. Furthermore, certain States continue to resist the call of the international community to adhere to the NPT and to place their nuclear activities under international safeguards; some States also insist on obsolete doctrines of nuclear deterrence.

Regarding the elimination of nuclear weapons, various initiatives have been submitted, including one by the New Agenda coalition, of which Egypt is a member. We are encouraged by the overwhelming support extended to draft resolutions sponsored by the New Agenda coalition over the past two years, and we hope that this year's text will be adopted by an overwhelming majority reflecting the international community's fulfilment of the commitments it made during the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, specifically, the unequivocal undertaking by nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear weapons as stipulated in article VI of the Treaty.

We further welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to hold an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, a proposal that was endorsed by heads of State or Government in the Millennium Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit. We hope that such a conference can be convened in the very near future, because it would constitute an additional step towards the implementation of the 1998 initiative of President Hosni Mubarak on the holding of an international conference on ways to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction pose an equal threat to all mankind. Thus, reason dictates a unified international effort to foster a climate propitious to the establishment of the mechanisms necessary to completely eliminate that threat within an international framework. This matter should be entrusted to the Conference on Disarmament as the proper international forum for the negotiation of disarmament issues. We regret the Conference's repeated failure over the past three years to agree on an agenda. We further regret the lack of political will, especially among the five nuclear-weapon States, to enter into constructive multilateral negotiations that would lead to the full implementation of their commitments under article VI of the NPT. We believe that that position, especially following the NPT Review Conference, not only contradicts their general commitments under article VI and those undertaken at the sixth Review Conference, but also compromises the principles and objectives of the Treaty. Therefore, we believe that the overall process of international work in

this sphere ought to accord with the following four principles.

The first is the need for a non-discriminatory international treaty banning nuclear weapons, and for a treaty to ban fissile materials in a broader context, including stockpiles of such materials.

The second is the need for the international community to recognize that the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

The third relates to the need to agree on international arrangements to assure the prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States. We look forward to serious work in the Conference on Disarmament to that end, with a view to agreeing on arrangements that go beyond the scope of Security Council resolutions 255 (1968) and 984 (1995) and that include elements relating to credibility and to deterrence.

The final principle is related, in the context of the Conference on Disarmament, to the need for a serious commitment to prevent an arms race in outer space. We regret the failure of the Conference to deal with this topic. We emphasize the importance of ceasing the arms race, which is harmful and is a waste of human energy, before it is too late. Failure to negotiate a resolution of the arms race will tie our hands in the face of adverse and dangerous technological advances controlled by a minority of nations. Should we wait for a disaster, and then try to deal with it?

Progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons has to start with serious regional efforts that aim at realizing nuclear disarmament and at ridding the world of nuclear dangers. In our region, the Middle East, all States of the region have committed themselves to realizing this lofty objective by adhering to the NPT and abiding by all related undertakings, with the exception of one country, Israel, which refuses to join in the region's efforts and which insists on retaining the nuclear option on the basis of redundant, obsolete doctrines of deterrence. In order to confront that inflexible position, the international community united in adopting the Final Document of the sixth NPT Review Conference, which reiterated the importance of Israel's adherence to the Treaty and the placing of its nuclear installations under comprehensive IAEA safeguards. That repeated call reflects the unique nature of the situation in the Middle East and reaffirms the need to follow up the implementation of the 1995 NPT Review Conference resolution on the Middle East.

Egypt realizes that addressing the threat of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is a matter of urgency and cannot be delayed or faced reluctantly. Egypt has thus stepped up its efforts to rid the region of the nuclear threat and of the danger of retaining nuclear facilities that are not subject to comprehensive IAEA safeguards.

The following initiatives have received wide and consolidated international support. In 1974, the General Assembly adopted, for the first time, a resolution on establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East; such a resolution has been adopted by consensus since 1980. The General Assembly has annually adopted by an overwhelming majority a resolution on the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, calling on Israel, as the sole State in the region outside the NPT, to adhere to the Treaty without delay and to discard the nuclear option. President Mubarak took the initiative, in April 1990, of calling for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and of their means of delivery in order to avert the dangers posed by these weapons, and as a natural extension of Egypt's initiative, calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region. The IAEA has annually adopted a consensus resolution on IAEA safeguards in the Middle East that calls for the implementation of full scope IAEA safeguard measures with regard to all nuclear facilities in the Middle East; furthermore, the Conference on Disarmament considers annually an agenda item on Israeli nuclear capabilities and their dangers. The Disarmament Commission's adoption in April 1990 of general guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones provided the basis for such a zone in the Middle East. The sixth NPT Review Conference affirmed that Israel must adhere to the Treaty and place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguard measures, with a view to realizing the objective of full adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East.

Despite all these efforts, Israel has not yet responded to the calls of the international community to adhere to the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguard measures. Nor has Israel responded to suggestions at the international and regional levels to begin serious negotiations on the subjective and procedural aspects for freeing the

Middle East of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, thus increasing our determination to achieve serious and effective progress to save the Middle East from the scourge of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Transparency in armaments includes transparency in all types of weapons and related military technologies, including weapons of mass destruction; it is not restricted to certain types of weapons. Transparency must contribute to a clearer view of the excessive accumulation of all types of weapons that endanger international peace and security and must function as an early warning mechanism.

In our view, transparency in weapons of mass destruction is equal in importance to transparency in conventional weapons because security is an integral whole. Despite Egypt's support for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a means of building confidence, our assessment of the meetings of governmental experts entrusted with the matter, including the meeting held this year, is that they failed to expand the scope of the Register to cover military holdings achieved through national production. They also failed to include additional types of weapons of mass destruction, contradicting resolution 46/36 L, which called for the establishment of the Register, and therefore leading to its further rigidity and weakness.

Egypt believes that the international community must confront all actions that could affect human security, particularly in respect of women and children. Egypt condemns the use of those sectors of society as human shields or their victimization in armed conflicts. Therefore, Egypt supports the convening of a United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as a means of reducing and alleviating the suffering of civilians exposed to the scourges of war. To that end, Egypt participated in the first preparatory meeting for the Conference and will participate in future meetings, in order to help establish sound principles necessary to ensure the success of the 2001 Conference.

In that context, we reiterate that the responsibility for illicit trade in small arms and light weapons does not fall on recipient parties only; it is also a legal and moral obligation of the manufacturing and exporting States, which must apply firmer export measures.

Despite our interest in the issue of small arms and light weapons, and our decision to participate in international efforts to organize and curb their handling, we remain cognizant of the need for serious consideration of all disarmament issues, with priority given to nuclear weapons because they are the most destructive. Our focus on nuclear weapons should not be overshadowed by an increasing interest in small weapons, anti-personnel landmines or other weapons. We need to fully recognize these issues and to treat them comprehensively and adequately.

With respect to landmines, Egypt is considered one of the world's most adversely affected countries. The number of mines and other explosive devices placed on Egyptian soil by forces involved in conflicts is estimated at 23 million. To deal with this problem, Egypt has, among other things, cooperated with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), which resulted in a visit to Egypt in February 2000 and in the preparation of a report on the mine problem in Egypt.

We express our deepest appreciation for the efforts of UNMAS and hope for future cooperation with other countries to clear Egypt of mines, which have hindered development for the last 50 years and have destroyed the lives of women, children and elderly people in Egypt.

While recognizing the humanitarian goal of the treaty, Egypt continues to maintain that the Ottawa Convention lacks the vision necessary to deal comprehensively with all aspects related to landmines, a stance that Egypt has declared at numerous forums and that needs no further reiteration.

Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee, and to assure you of our assistance in carrying out your tasks. We will cooperate fully with you so that the work of this Committee will be successful. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau who will assist you. It is a pleasure for me to express my delegation's full appreciation to Mr. Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his comprehensive statement on efforts undertaken on disarmament issues. We hope his efforts will be successful in strengthening international peace and security.

The international community has witnessed, since we last met, developments, both positive and negative, in disarmament issues -- a fact referred to by you, Mr. Chairman, in your opening statement. Those

positive changes include the Millennium Summit Declaration, in which heads of State called for eliminating the dangers posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the scourge of war, which caused more than 5 million deaths in the past decade. In that Declaration they also called for stopping the activities of mafia groups using armaments to provoke war in order to preserve their own greedy interests. Proceeds from the sales of weapons reached $30.3 billion last year, a record number. Studies have also shown an increase in military expenditures, which has had a negative impact on disarmament efforts.

Another extremely important event was the historic agreement reached at New York last May during the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as the ratification of a document that the Secretary-General called an important step towards fulfilling mankind's dream of building a peaceful world free from nuclear threats. We welcome the political commitment of the five major nuclear Powers to respect that document and to eliminate their nuclear arsenals, which include over 35,000 nuclear warheads. We hope that they will respect their commitments so that we may create a world free from nuclear weapons and so that they may extend their technical assistance to non-nuclear States to enable those States to utilize atomic energy for peaceful purposes, in accordance with the provisions of the NPT.

The NPT can remain viable only if all the nuclear Powers are committed to the gradual elimination of their nuclear arsenals and to strengthening international peace and security. If we wish to maintain trust, we must move towards a de-alerting system for nuclear missiles and the withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from foreign bases and international waters. Moneys allocated to maintaining nuclear weapons should be used to improve the lives of the poorest peoples, especially by eradicating pandemic diseases and poverty and improving their health and education systems.

The international community emphasizes the importance of the NPT, but Israel refuses to respect calls to end its nuclear arms programmes. Israel's nuclear capacity continues to grow and to endanger regional and international peace and security. That capacity threatens the Arab world, from the Gulf to the Atlantic. The threat of nuclear catastrophe as a result of Tel Aviv's acquisition of over 200 nuclear warheads is serious, not to mention its conventional, biological, chemical and other weapons. Israel has acquired them with the blessing of a major nuclear Power, which upholds a double standard by helping Israel develop its nuclear technology so that it can produce weapons of mass destruction, while preventing other countries from using the nuclear technology at their disposal for peaceful purposes. With that major Power's blessing, Tel Aviv continues to strengthen its nuclear capacity on land, in the sea and in the air. In fact, it was reported several weeks ago that Tel Aviv had received three Dolphin submarines from a major European Power. Those vessels can carry cruise missiles and launch nuclear warheads. In fact, those missiles were tested successfully in the Indian Ocean.

The Israeli army has at its disposal all sorts of weapons and is willing to use them. In recent days we have seen that army use those weapons to kill and wound scores of unarmed Palestinian men, women and children and to destroy their property simply because they are protesting colonization and calling for respect for their rights and dignity.

We have referred to this very important issue because we are convinced that until the international community takes effective measures to force Israel to adhere to the NPT, eliminate its nuclear weapons and heed the call of the international community to become part of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and place its nuclear installations under verification, then all non-proliferation efforts will be in vain, as will every disarmament effort by the international community.

We feel that the Russian Federation's ratification of the START II Treaty and the United States decision to put off deployment of a national missile defence system are positive developments that should boost confidence and further international peace and security. However, negative developments are also of concern to us. They include the inability of the Conference on Disarmament to come up with an adequate agenda. We hope that a compromise will be reached very soon in that regard.

We welcome the holding next year of an international conference to debate all the important issues related to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We also welcome the efforts of some African countries to collect and destroy such weapons in order

to improve their social and economic situation. The international community must help the States concerned to set up a comprehensive system to deal with this situation and to provide them with the necessary resources to keep improving. I would also like to mention the recent International Conference on War-affected Children, held in Canada. We support the recommendations from that Conference to save those children, protect them from violence and make it possible for them to live in dignity.

My country has acceded to most international agreements on nuclear disarmament. However, we need to review certain agreements that concentrate on some issues and bypass others. In this regard, I refer to the Ottawa Convention, which failed to mention the responsibilities of belligerent countries that planted mines in the territories of other countries. Victim countries need de-mining assistance. Libya is one such country that has suffered from mines placed in its territory during the Second World War. We therefore ask the countries responsible for planting them to shoulder their responsibilities.

In conclusion, I wish to express our hope that the Disarmament Commission will make every effort to reach consensus compromise regarding the need to take all necessary measures in the area of disarmament, to address the difficulties confronted by the international community, to put an end to growing weapons-related expenditures, and to allocate more funds to the developing countries and deploy greater efforts to allow them to move forward and reap the benefits of globalization.

Mr. Kongstad (Norway): I would like to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I can assure you of our support and cooperation.

This is the first General Assembly of the twenty-first century. Our heads of State or Government, in the Millennium Declaration, stated their resolve to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. The task for us is to contribute to the realization of that vision. Political will is a key to progress. Let us make it a new beginning in our efforts to achieve peace, security and disarmament.

I would like to focus on a limited number of issues that Norway believes should be given special priority in our work.

The threats that motivated the push for a global nuclear non-proliferation regime four decades ago remain very real today. Our ultimate goal remains complete nuclear disarmament. Strengthened adherence to and compliance with international instruments are necessary to achieve this goal. If we fail to reduce the political and strategic significance of nuclear weapons, our non-proliferation efforts will be in vain.

The successful outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) gives cause for new optimism. The Conference reaffirmed the importance of the integrity of the Treaty for international peace and security. Further practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation were identified and agreed upon.

The programme of action identified in paragraph 15 of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference is a significant result. We particularly welcome the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

The Norwegian Government confirms the commitments made at the NPT Review Conference and will work to carry forward the conclusions reached at the Conference. We believe the Millennium Assembly should reconfirm and consolidate the results of the NPT Review Conference. The challenge now before us is to build on the significant outcome of the Conference and translate words into practical action. The Final Document of the Conference should be seen as a basis for practical steps and systematic and progressive efforts to achieve the disarmament objectives of the Treaty.

In the NPT process we have the framework we need. We call on all States to work actively to realize the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and implement the agreed measures and practical steps. We hope that the important results of the Review Conference can lead those States that are still not parties to the agreement to look again at their position. Universal adherence to the Treaty and full compliance of all parties with its provisions remain the best way to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

The signals from the disarmament negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation are of the highest importance, not only in a bilateral

nuclear disarmament context, but also for global efforts to curb any further proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We welcome the ratification of START II by the Russian Federation earlier this year. This was an important contribution to the goal we are all striving for. The early entry into force and full implementation of START II and the conclusion of START III negotiations with a view to further significant strategic reductions will be of great importance for the nuclear disarmament process. We encourage the Russian Federation and the United States to negotiate and implement new measures for strategic arms reductions.

We believe increased transparency by the nuclear-weapon States with regard to their nuclear-weapon capabilities and the implementation of agreements pursuant to article VI of the NPT can be important steps leading to nuclear disarmament, as was also recognized by the NPT Review Conference.

START III negotiations and specific transparency measures related to strategic inventories are both initiatives that would reflect the reduced importance of nuclear weapons and contribute significantly to a better climate of international cooperation by demonstrating a commitment to the practical follow-up of the steps agreed at the NPT Review Conference.

The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty is a cornerstone of strategic stability, contributing to the broader disarmament and arms control process. We welcome the reaffirmation by the Russian Federation and the United States of their continued commitment to the ABM Treaty and to the strengthening, preservation and continuation of the Treaty. We urge the parties to continue their cooperation on this basis.

A key element in a comprehensive strategy to contain and eliminate nuclear weapons is a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosives. The conclusion of such a treaty in the Conference on Disarmament remains a high priority for Norway. It is time to make compromises in Geneva. We hope that in January next year it will be possible for the Conference on Disarmament to agree on a programme of work that includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on such a treaty, with a view to their conclusion within five years.

There is also a need to address the issue of stockpiles related to excess weapons material, military inventories and highly enriched uranium for non-explosive purposes, all of which represent a proliferation risk. These issues should be dealt with in connection with, or through, a process independent of any negotiations in Geneva on a ban on production of fissile material.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was included among 25 core multilateral treaties identified in advance of the Millennium Summit as representing the key objectives of the United Nations. We warmly welcome the decision by the Duma of the Russian Federation to ratify the Treaty. We call upon all States, in particular those whose ratification is a prerequisite for the entry into force of the Treaty, to continue their efforts to ensure its early entry into force.

We welcome the fact that the NPT Review Conference placed the issue of non-strategic nuclear weapons firmly on the international disarmament agenda. We continue to stress the need for further reductions in tactical nuclear weapons. Tactical nuclear weapons can be deployed rapidly and play a politically destabilizing role in areas subject to conflict. It is important to ensure that the handling and reduction of such weapons are made part of a more comprehensive disarmament process.

Increased transparency with regard to non-strategic weapons could be a first step and would be an important confidence-building measure. The next step could be the development of a programme for warhead destruction underpinned by bilateral verification procedures. The unilateral declarations of the United States and Russia in 1991 to withdraw and eliminate tactical nuclear weapons are important and should be reconfirmed, and a time-frame for implementation should be determined.

Norway's active involvement in international disarmament efforts is based on the premise that global security can best be achieved by seeking national security through common efforts. That is why our disarmament and non-proliferation policy is an integral part of our security policy. If we are to succeed in developing permanent regional and global security arrangements, it is important that all countries be firmly bound to the norms and institutions established by international disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation efforts should therefore be intensified and

incorporated into the security policy priorities of all countries.

Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation will play a major role in the achievement of the security objectives of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As part of its broad approach to security, NATO actively supports arms control and disarmament, both nuclear and conventional. NATO remains committed to the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to reversing such proliferation, where it has occurred, through diplomatic means.

At NATO's Washington summit in April 1999, NATO members committed themselves to reviewing the alliance's policy options in support of confidence- and security-building measures, verification, non-proliferation and arms control and disarmament. As a member of NATO, Norway will, as a matter of priority, continue to actively support and contribute to this review as part of our efforts to promote a broader, more comprehensive and more verifiable international arms control and disarmament process. Norway strongly supports strengthened efforts to combat the proliferation of missiles and missile technology for weapons of mass destruction. Recent missile flight tests have once again demonstrated the urgency of curbing such proliferation.

We see a need for common international norms on missile-related activities. Such norms should include a definition of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour concerning the development, production, stockpiling or other means of acquiring missiles and missile technology. Norway takes an active part in ongoing discussions on how to develop enhanced and more effective measures to prevent missile proliferation, including strengthened export controls, as well as the establishment of relevant confidence-building measures, inter alia, through transparency measures or test moratoriums. We welcome initiatives taken in this area and look forward to taking part in the work on the establishment of effective measures to curb the proliferation of missiles for weapons of mass destruction.

The proliferation of biological weapons is widely recognized as a growing international security problem, both for inter-State conflicts and as a potential dimension of terrorism. It is therefore becoming increasingly important to reach agreement on an effective and reliable verification regime for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Norway remains deeply committed to the conclusion of the negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group of the States parties in Geneva as soon as possible, but not at any cost. We must not compromise established standards for verification regimes. We need a result that can truly serve to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. We have now reached a stage in the negotiations at which necessary political will is required to achieve a final result.

Small arms and light weapons are the common weapons of armed conflict, responsible for the largest number of casualties. They make conflict more likely in tense situations, more vicious once started, and harder to recover from once ended. We are facing a common challenge. The problems caused by the uncontrolled spread and use of small arms are manifest worldwide.

Fortunately, the small arms issue is receiving increased international attention. The decision to hold a United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is a reflection of this fact. The United Nations Conference should support initiatives and efforts at national and regional levels. The Conference should also adopt a broad approach in addressing the small arms problems, which are multifaceted and multidisciplinary. Norway shares the opinion of the Secretary-General, expressed in the millennium report, that civil society and non-governmental organizations should be invited to participate fully. Non-governmental organizations possess experience and expertise that is indispensable for the Conference and the preparations for it.

We welcome the fact that Member States, through the General Assembly's Millennium Declaration, have pledged to take concerted action to end illicit traffic in small arms. However, even if all illicit arms transfers were to be eliminated, the problem posed by surplus stocks and illicitly held small arms would remain. Norway has supported practical measures regarding the collection and destruction of small arms in western and southern Africa, as well as in Albania, and has provided financial support to the United Nations regional disarmament centres. Norway also actively supports various initiatives addressing small-arms-related problems in Europe within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the NATO Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council.

United Nations development agencies should have an important role to play in addressing the underlying sources of conflict and the problems of small arms in a comprehensive way. We have therefore provided financial support to the United Nations Development Programme Trust Fund for Support to Prevention and Reduction of the Proliferation of Small Arms. We hope that other Member States will also make contributions to this Fund.

Norway had the honour to chair the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the mine ban Convention, which took place in Geneva last month. The active participation of, in particular, mine-affected countries and relevant non-governmental organizations through the International Campaign to Ban Landmines was impressive and most encouraging. With almost 110 States having ratified the Convention, it has come a long way towards universalization in a relatively short period of time. Our emphasis should now be on the complete and efficient implementation of the various provisions of the Convention.

The overall objective is to prevent new injuries and deaths and to support the survivors. Our focus should be on practical mine action activities in the field. In order to maintain our momentum and be able to continue to mobilize the resources required for activities in the field, we also need a continuous multilateral process and an international focal point. Norway therefore strongly supports the inter-sessional work programme taking place in Geneva within the framework of the Convention.

The Ottawa process and the Convention banning anti-personnel mines have made a significant and measurable difference. An international norm has been established and is working. This is shown by the growing number of Governments acceding to and fully implementing the Convention, the reduced use of anti-personnel mines, the dramatic drop in the production of such mines, the almost complete halt in trade in mines, increased destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines, increased funding for mine action, fewer mine victims and the fact that more land has been demined. It is essential that we ensure sustainable and predictable future funding for mine action. To this end, Norway maintains its commitment to allocate $120 million over a five-year period.

I would like to make one final comment on conventional weapons. We are faced with growing political and humanitarian concern about the indiscriminate effects of explosive remnants of war. We therefore note with interest initiatives to address this important issue within the context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). We must seek a way to combine military utility with humanitarian acceptability.

The Conference on Disarmament is now in its fourth year without having done any substantive work. The present stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament reflects differing interests and political realities beyond the Conference on Disarmament, and cannot be resolved by the Conference itself. Apart from the current state of inertia, the Conference is also in urgent need of reform. The most pressing issue is to expand membership. Norway has long held the view that any country wishing to become a member should be admitted to that forum. If we claim to negotiate with a view to universal application, we have to open up for universal participation. Nothing else is politically justifiable.

Reform of the rules of procedure and the working methods is essential to the proper functioning of the Conference. The removal of the consensus rule should be considered, at least for procedural matters. It is important to speed up the reform process to avoid a situation where the Conference on Disarmament becomes an institution unable to deal with real matters of concern or to address relevant disarmament and arms control challenges. The existence of the Conference on Disarmament is not an end in itself. However, many problems can be dealt with only at the multilateral level, and our concern about the Conference on Disarmament as an institution is based on a firm belief in and commitment to multilateralism.

I should like to conclude by underlining the fact that the prospects for progress are a matter of commitment to common political objectives. Let us make use of the coming month to focus on practical steps that can contribute to a strengthened security system for the new millennium. This will be the aim of our participation in this Committee.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.